THE EFFECT OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS' SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS ON CHILDREN'S TEST PERFORMANCE

BY

CYNTHIA A. KINNANE

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This dissertation is dedicated to my first teachers, Eileen Marie Kinnane and G. Francis Kinnane, who through their never-ending love and support encouraged me to grow.

My mother taught me how to be strong, to love, to be compassionate, and to have a positive attitude toward life. She believes that a positive attitude uplifts and guides one to become the best she can be. I have been very lucky throughout my life to have someone so very special. Her heart is a treasure of kindness, strength, loveliness, insight, and grace.

When my father was faced with a challenge, he would stick out his chin and go to work. This symbolic gesture incorporates the values of drive, determination, persistence, and guts. He gave me all of these characteristics. Not too long ago, my father passed away. I feel very privileged to have had such a wonderful teacher, and his love I will cherish forever.

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by

Cynthia A. Kinnane

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the treatment effects of a semi-structured interview designed to promote examiner familiarity on the test performance and perceptions of exceptional children. A randomized posttest only, control group design was employed to compare results from the treatment and the control group. The treatment group received a one-half-hour, semi-structured interview (SSI) one week prior to the administration of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R) and the Children's Perception Rating Profile (CPRP).

The participants of the study were second and third grade students referred to school psychologists for testing because of academic difficulties. They were randomly assigned to either the treatment or the control group.

Posttest WISC-R scores were analyzed by a _t_-test for comparison of means. The difference between the group means was not statistically significant.

A multivariate _t_-test, Hotelling's T^2, was used to analyze the posttest CPRP scores. This statistical test was used due to the assumed correlation among the items on the CPRP. No statistically significant differences between the means were found.

Lack of statistically significant differences was interpreted as evidence that examiner familiarity, as defined for this study, does not affect test performance or perceptions of the exceptional children. Thus it may not be necessary for a school psychologist to spend time with a child prior to the administration of the WISC-R, such as in the case of the SSI.

One implication is that the WISC-R is structurally robust enough to withstand the extra-test variable of familiarity. Due to the wide use of standardized tests in making placement and programming decisions, the results support the use of the WISC-R in intellectual assessment.

A further implication is that positive perceptions can be established during the standard introductory time suggested by the WISC-R manual. This finding is particularly important to school psychologists because they routinely are faced with multiple evaulations and insufficient time. In sum, familiarity as presented for this study, did not affect children's test performances or perceptions.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Assessment traditionally has been identified as the role and function of school psychologists (Bardon, 1982), and standardized intelligence tests have been one of the major tools used in the assessment of children (Anastasi, 1976). Standardized intelligence tests are a part of most criteria used in making decisions regarding interventions and educational placement. Given this, it is understandable that school psychologists attempt to facilitate optimal test performance.

Standardized intelligence tests are administered in accordance with procedures outlined in a test manual. The purpose of these specific guidelines and instructions is to keep conditions constant from one testing session to another. It is assumed that standardized procedures control for most extraneous factors which may influence a child's test performance (Fuchs & Fuchs, 1986). The results of investigations on a situational variable called examiner familiarity, however, suggest that this may not always be the case (Kinnie & Sternlof, 1971).

According to a review of the professional literature on "examiner familiarity" (Fuchs, Fuchs, Garwick, & Featherstone, 1983) most researchers agree that establishing a positive relationship with a child prior to the administration of a test can have a positive effect on a child's test performance. Some related studies date back to the early 1950s when Sacks (1952) concluded that the variable termed "social relationship" affected performance on the Stanford-Binet Intellegence Test. In this early study a social relationship, or familiarity, was established by a test administrator working with a teacher in a classroom of children for one hour a day for 10 days. The examiner showed interest in the children by talking with them and playing games with them. It was assumed that the presence of the test administrator in the classroom created a relationship that was familiar to students who were to be tested. Sacks concluded that if the intelligence scores of subjects were to be comparable, then the variable termed social relationship must be controlled or it would be a source of bias.

Further investigations (e.g., Fuchs, Featherstone, Garwick, & Fuchs, 1984; Fuchs & Fuchs, 1984) on examiner familiarity emphasized two main themes. First, familiarity between examiner and examinee has a positive effect on language-impaired children's test performance. Second, this familiarity may constitute a type of test bias.

In light of these and other findings (e.g., Barnett & Zucker, 1986; Field, 1981) school psychologists need to establish a standardized form of pretest contact with examinees. One hour a day for 10 days, as suggested in one study (Sacks, 1952), is not feasible in most school settings.

Suggested in most manuals on intelligence testing is that the examiner establish positive rapport with the examinee. The manuals, however, do not clearly define rapport and offer only limited guidelines and techniques for establishing it. For example, the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Childen-Revised (WISC-R) manual (Wechsler, 1974) offers general guidelines for establishing rapport which include engaging the child in conversation, having materials organized prior to the child's arrival, and establishing an easy manner of administration. The time prior to the administration of the subtests is suggested to take no longer than 5 to 10 minutes. Yet, in the majority of the studies on examiner familiarity, the time taken to establish positive and effective familiarity was at least a half-hour. What is lacking in the research on familiarity has been a set of procedures which school psychologists could follow and implement.

There is a need to investigate further examiner familiarity in an attempt to develop a set of brief procedures which facilitate optimal test performance. If practical, effective procedures were developed, a more systematic approach to establishing familiarity could become a standard part of the assessment process.

Related to the preceding findings are the investigations on the relationship between children's perceptions and test performance. Recently, researchers have examined such variables as a child's positive attitude toward test taking (Gleadow, 1982), positive self-evaluations of performance (Zatz & Chassin, 1983), and realistic level of expectancy (Battle, 1966) as influencing test performance.

The conceptualization of part of the current study was based on the investigations of LaVoie and Hodapp (1987). The findings which emerged from their study were that children who could make accurate judgments about their own test performance, who believed the test to be important, and who felt that their abilities and efforts were strongly related to their subsequent performances, scored better than those who did not have these perceptions. They argued for the development of conditions which could facilitate a child's positive self-evaluation on these variables.

If children could have a positive experience with an adult prior to the adult administering a test, children might feel more positive toward the testing situation. There was, therefore, a need to investigate conditions in which an adult attempted to positively influence a child's perception of his/her test performance.

A primary purpose of this study was to assess the effectiveness of using a semi-structured interview as a vehicle for establishing familiarity, improving test scores, and positively influencing children's perceptions toward school psychologists and testing. A semi-structured interview (SSI) would provide a format for an examiner to follow.

The paucity of information on interviewing children prior to testing may be related to the lack of valuing a child's view point about the identified problem. Ironically, interviews which secure a child's caretakers' perspectives of the identified problem are usually valued and have been routinely conducted (LaGreca, 1983). Dean (1984) and Korchin and Schuldberg (1981) stressed the use of an interview and pointed to its wide acceptance and use in clinical and mental health settings. In those settings an interview with a child is perceived as a "technique particularly well adapted to uncovering subjective definitions of experiences, to assessing children's perceptions of the significant people and events in their environment and to studying how they conceptualize life experiences" (Yarrow, 1960, p. 561). Too often, however, this kind of information is not obtained by school psychologists during their assessment procedures.

In related fields such as clinical psychology, psychiatry, and mental health, the interview is viewed as a valid, reliable instrument suitable for securing information regarding the child's perspective of a problem. Understanding the child's perspective of a problem is seen by many (Barnett & Zucker, 1986; Goodman, 1972; Herjanic & Campbell, 1977) as essential to acccurate and complete assessment and intervention. This is not a new idea. In 1955, George Kelly stated: "If you don't know what's wrong with a client, ask. He (or she) may tell you" (Kelly, 1955, p. 201). Despite Kelly's statement, semi-structured or structured interviews are typically absent in most school-based evaluations.

Despite Burke and DeMers' (1979) claim that school psychologists recognize the interview as a diagnostic procedure, few references to an assessment interview of children appear within the school psychology literature. In addition, most school psychologists have not received any systematic training on interviewing children.

Wiens (1976) contended that school psychologists have been left to develop their own personalized styles of interviewing. Consequently, the interview styles of school psychologists differ considerably. The lack of guidelines, procedures, and training presents a handicap to the credibility and utility of the interview (Matarazzo & Wiens, 1972).

From the preceding investigations it seems that familiarity with an examiner may influence children's test performances. No standardized procedures have been designed to establish familiarity. A semi-structured interview may provide the needed structure to establish familiarity which, in turn, could influence the assessment outcome.

Statement of the Problem

There is a need to evaluate the possible influences which a semi-structured interview designed to promote examiner familiarity may have on the intellectual assessment of children. If it can be demonstrated that conducting such a semi-structured interview with a child prior to testing positively influences test performance, then school psychologists' assessment practices may need to change.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of a semi-structured interview (SSI), designed by the researcher, to promote examiner familiarity on the test performance and perceptions of second and third grade children. More specifically, the effectiveness of the semi-structured interview with elementary school children who were referred to school psychologists because of suspected academic disabilities was examined.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. Will a semi-structured interview (SSI), in which a student has an opportunity to become more familiar with the examiner, affect a student's subsequent test performance on a standardized intelligence test?

2. Will a semi-structured interview (SSI), affect a student's perceptions of the school psychologist who administers a standardized test?

3. Will a semi-structured interview (SSI), affect a student's perceptions of his/her test performance?

Definition of Terms

A child is referred for academic difficulties when he/she is not functioning satisfactorily in at least one of the following areas: reading, mathematics, spelling, or language arts.

An examiner is a certified school psychologist who will conduct semi-structured interviews and administer the WISC-R tests.

Familiarity refers to an experimentally induced condition or state between an examiner and an examinee. It involves an acquaintance and knowledge of another person. It is assumed for the purposes of this study that familiarity will be developed through the use of the semi-structured interview (SSI).

An interview session is the period of time beginning when the school psychologist meets a child for testing, conducts the semi-structured interview, and returns the child to the classroom.

Pretest contact is a meeting between a school psychologist and a child prior to the testing session. In this study pretest contact will be used synonymously with semi-structured interview.

In a semi-structured interview a school psychologist follows a guide containing topics and questions or leads during a pretest contact. This term will refer to the SSI.

School psychologists are professionals who are certified by the state of Florida to provide psychological services.

Target students are students who are tested by school psychologists.

Test performance refers to how a child functions on a standardized test. In this study the WISC-R will be used to measure a child's test performance.

Testing session is the period of time beginning when the school psychologist meets a child for testing, administers the WISC-R, and returns the child to the classroom.

Overview of the Remainder of the Paper

The remainder of the study is organized into four additional chapters. A review of the related professional literature is presented in Chapter II. Chapter III contains the research methodology and describes the procedures of the study. The results of this study are presented in Chapter IV. Chapter V includes a discussion of the results and offers implications and recommendations.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In this chapter a review and synthesis of the literature relevant to the impact of the semi-structured interview on children's test performance and perceptions are presented. Assessment as the predominant practice is identified in the section on the role and function of school psychologists. Next, an overview of assessment and testing isolates testing as a key feature in the assessment process. This section further provides the context for the discussion of conditions which might influence test scores.

A discussion on examiner familiarity and children's perceptions of their test performance follows. The applicable findings from the literature on examiner familiarity support the need for extensive pretest contact to facilitate a child's optimal test performance. Next, the relationship between children's perception of their test performance and their actual performance is described. A discussion follows concerning children's perceptions of school psychologists. Finally, a review of interviewing procedures provides data relevant to the development of a procedure to standardize pretest contact, which may facilitate the acquisition of a child's positive perceptions of the school psychologist and his/her test performance and optimal test performance.

Role and Function of School Psychologists

To date there has been little consensus about the role and function of school psychologists. Preoccupation with this issue dates back to 1896, during the beginnings of school psychology, with the works of Lightner Witmer, who was founder of the first psychological clinic at the University of Pennsylvania. Witmer attempted to apply psychological techniques to understanding learning problems of children (French, 1984). Generally, school psychology evolved from Witmer's desire to combine knowledge of education and psychology to offer practical programs for mentally handicapped children (Wallin & Ferguson, 1967).

Since these early years, role changes which have occurred are a result of internal and external school forces. Initially most school psychologists viewed their function to be testing and occasionally providing intervention strategies (Hutt, 1923). Walter (1925) was one of the first to broaden the role to include such functions as research, consultation, and the promotion of mental hygiene programs. The practice and direction of the profession of school psychology was a major point of debate at the Thayer Conference (1954), the Spring Hill Symposium (1980), and the Olympia Conference (1981).

Over the years the roles of professional school psychologists has grown and diversified but members of the profession continue to debate its roles. The services that school psychologists perform are influenced by the characteristics of the individual and the environment in which he/she works. The range of possible functions extends from psychometrics to actions which affect school policies and procedures (Bardon, 1982). Bardon identified five broad functions: assessment, intervention, consultation, education, and evaluation. Despite an expanse of services, the role of assessment remains the predominant function for most school psychologists (Goh, Teslow, & Fuller, 1981).

Assessment and Testing

Regardless of one's theoretical orientation, assessment is a major service provided by most school psychologists. It has been estimated that school psychologists spend approximately 50% of their time in assessment activites (Benson & Hughes, 1985). Assessments produce data to facilitate educational decisions concerning screening, placement, instructional planning, pupil evaluation and program evaluation (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1981).

Ideally, assessment includes multiple methods with multiple persons to provide a comprehensive understanding of a child (Kanfer, Eyberg, & Krahn, 1983). By using multiple methods of evaluation, the weaknesses of one measure can be compensated by the use of another. Traditionally, one of the tools used in making these important decisions has been the standardized intelligence test.

Testing has been a major part of the heritage of school psychology. Historically, developments in the testing movement directly influenced the birth and growth of school psychology (Wallin & Ferguson, 1967). School psychologists were initially referred to as "test experts," "Binet-testers," or simply "testers" (Bardon, 1982).

A primary reason for testing involves the measurement of differences between individuals (Anastasi, 1976). By following standardized procedures, a child's test performance can be compared to performance of children on whom the test was normed. Any condition or variable, however, which might influence that child's test performance will result in error variance and reduce test validity (Anastasi, 1976).

Numerous investigations have been conducted on tests and situational or contextual variables to assess their impact on test results. Among these investigations are those which have analyzed the influence of examiner familiarity. Consideration as to the importance of such a condition and its effect on the test scores is presented in the next section.

Examiner Familiarity

Fuchs, Fuchs, Garwick, and Featherstone (1983) used a repeated measures cross-over design to examine the performance of thirty-four language-impaired preschool children when tested by their classroom teacher and by an unfamiliar teacher. The mean length of time used to establish familiarity between the children and the classroom teacher was 7.4 months. The results of this study affirmed that examiner familiarity significantly influenced the test performance of handicapped preschool children. This study became the basis for future investigations. These subsequent investigations were conducted to examine the potential influence of familiarity on task complexity, examiner accuracy, professional experience, and handicapped versus non-handicapped populations.

One of the secondary findings of the 1983 study showed that the child's performance on various levels of task complexity would be influenced by familiarity. In 1984 Fuchs, Featherstone, Garwick, and Fuchs systematically investigated this variable. In this study familiarity was not experimentally induced. The authors chose to use the children's classroom teachers. The eleven teachers had been with the children for approximately six weeks. In contrast to the presumed influence, task complexity was not found to be influenced by familiarity. The investigators did, however, strengthen their original finding that familiarity influenced the test performance of handicapped children.

Fuchs and Fuchs (1984) investigated the possibility that the accuracy of the scoring may be influenced by the examiner's familiarity with the child. This study also used language-impaired preschoolers. Familiarity was established by making a one-hour home visit and spending an additional hour in school with the child immediately prior to testing. The investigators showed that regardless of whether the examiner who had established familiarity with the child scored the protocol or a rater who had observed a video of the assessment scored the protocol, the handicapped child demonstrated a stronger performance with the familiar examiner.

Research was then conducted to test the effect of examiner experience on the test performance of preschool language-impaired children. As in the 1984 study on examiner accuracy, familiarity was established by the examiner spending one hour in the child's home, playing with the child and conducting a structured interview with the mother, followed by an hour of play with the child at school immediately preceding the testing session. There were twenty-two examiners who participated in this study. Eleven examiners were classified as experienced due to their formal training and professional work which focused on assessment. The other eleven examiners were enrolled in a graduate program in education. Fuchs, Fuchs, Dailey, and Power (1985) concluded that experience was not a factor that influenced test performance.

In a follow-up study, Fuchs, Fuchs, Power, and Dailey (1985) sought to assess the influence of familiarity on both nonhandicapped children and older school-aged handicapped children. The results supported their prior research findings and revealed that school-aged handicapped children also perform better with familiar examiners. However, the test performance of nonhandicapped preschool and school-aged children was not influenced by familiarity. The process of establishing familiarity varied for the two groups of children. For the preschool children, the examiner made a one hour home visit and spent 20 minutes with the child in school prior to the testing. The structured interview with the mother was not mentioned. For the school-aged children, the examiner made a 5 minute telephone call and spent 30 minutes with the child in the school setting prior to the administration of the test. Despite the reduced time spent with the school-aged handicapped child, familiarity still had a significant influence on test performance.

In 1986 Fuchs and Fuchs presented a meta-analysis from 22 studies on the influence of examiner familiarity on the test performances of children. Of the 22 studies, 18 were published. The four unpublished studies included three doctoral dissertations and one paper presented at the American Psychological Association conference in 1970.

Of the 18 studies reviewed, 16 indicated that familiarity made a difference in the test performance of subjects participating in the study. The two studies reporting negative results were Field (1981) and Irons (1981). Field (1981) reported that familiarity deflated the children's scores. In this study examiner familiarity was established by using examiners who worked in the clinic which provided periodic assessments of the children in the study. The familiar examiner had previously assessed the child at least once. The author cautioned that the type of familiarity may have influenced the results. First-hand knowledge of the child's previous test performance may result in built-in expectations of the child's capabilities. Thus, the examiner may not work as hard as if he/she does not already have expectations for the child.

Irons (1981) also concluded that examiner familiarity did not result in higher test performance. In this study familiarity was experimentally induced by the examiner spending varying amounts of time with a child prior to assessment. Three experimental time conditions were investigated: spending 5 minutes prior to testing, spending 15 minutes prior to testing, and spending 5 minutes with the child twice in one week followed by 5 minutes prior to testing. A reason for the outcome may have been due to the limited amount of time spent with each child.

The procedure for establishing familiarity is the relevant feature of the present investigation. In all but 3 of the 18 studies familiarity was defined in terms of a personal relationship, either experimentally induced or previously established. In the remaining 3 studies familiarity was established through a social interaction program (Jacobson, Berger, Bergman, Millham, & Greeson, 1971), an association with similar adults (Kinnie, & Sternlof, 1971), or by viewing a video of a testing session (Piersel, Brody, & Kratochwill, 1977). A wide variety of procedures for experimentally establishing familiarity was investigated. For example, in one study, the examiner spent 10 days as an aide in the child's classroom (Sacks, 1952), while in another the examiner spent a total of 3 hours in pretest contact (Fuchs et al., 1983). Despite the positive influence of examiner familiarity, the procedures generally are not practical for a typical school psychologist to implement.

The problem in schools is one of time constraints and the type of procedures involved in establishing familiarity. In most of the studies demonstrating an effect, the time spent in establishing familiarity was over an hour in addition to some contact outside of the school. Consideration needs to be given to the practical issues of spending the extensive amount of time required to establish familiarity. Second, the procedures most often involved play activities. There was no attempt made in any of the studies to systematically secure information from the child.

This review of examiner familiarity has identified a variable which has often been shown to influence a child's test performance. Related to these findings are the studies which have examined the influence of a child's perceptions on test performance.

Children's Perceptions

Test Performance

There is considerable evidence that test results may be influenced by students' perceptions of specific characteristics (e.g., LaVoie & Hodapp, 1987; Zatz & Chassin, 1983). The literature demonstrates a relationship between how the children perceive their test performance and their actual performance. The following presentation of investigations supports this assumption.

LaVoie and Hodapp (1987) investigated the children's subjective ratings of their test performance. The study involved 311 children in grades four, five and six. After completing the Iowa Test of Basic Skills the children were asked to fill out questionnaires in which they rated the following: actual performance on subtests, effort expended, ratio of ability to luck, extent of nervousness and importance of test to self, parents and teachers. LaVoie and Hodapp concluded that children who could accurately assess their performance, understand that effort and ability were strongly connected with performance, perceive the test as important, and were only moderately nervous, achieved higher scores than those who could not.

Crandall, Katkovsky, and Crandall (1965) reported locus of control as a variable associated with children's perceptions of their performances. That is, the authors attempted to measure children's beliefs in internal versus external responsiblity for their achievement test scores and grades. A sample of 923 children from grades three, four, five, six, eight, ten and twelve, was drawn from five different schools. The children were administered achievement measures and a questionnaire (Intellectual Achievement Responsiblity, IRA) developed by the authors to assess a child's beliefs in self-responsiblity. The authors found that, specifically for young girls and older boys, the construct--belief in self-responsibllity--is a variable which can influence standardized achievement test performances.

Zatz and Chassin (1983) investigated the relationship between task-debilitating cognitions, anxiety, and performance. Task debilitating cognitions included children's negative evaluations of their test behavior and off-task thoughts during testing. These cognitions were measured by the Children's Cognitive Assessment Questionnaire

(CCAQ) developed by the authors. The level of anxiety was measured by the children themselves on a 4-point scale. Although statistical significance was reported for anxiety and cognitions, the magnitude of the difference was small. Analysis of the results revealed that for boys the debilitating cognitions of negative evaluations and off-task thoughts were associated with lower performance than those who had positive cognitions. For girls, however, only one aspect of the debilitating cognitions--positive-evaluation--was demonstrated to be associated with performance.

Battle (1966) investigated four predictors for academic performance. These four variables dealt with students' perceptions of their minimal standard, belief in reaching the standard, grade expected, and the value of doing well. Each of these four varibles was positively related to school performance.

Given the findings from the preceding review, it is apparent that children's perceptions of themselves and their performance may influence their test performance. In other words, children come to a testing situation with a preset notion about their test performance which subsequently influences their actual performance (LaVoie & Hodapp, 1987). Therefore, it seems logical to attempt to develop a set of conditions which may facilitate a child's development of a positive preset notion about testing.

School Psychologists

A fundamental consideration in education is evaluations. The process of evaluation involves gathering information and analyzing the data so that judgments can be made. Typically the recipients of a service, program or other experience are the sources of the required information. School psychologists are routinely evaluated by administrators and indirectly by teachers and other professionals. Some of the clients of school psychologists are children. Yet children do not routinely evaluate school psychologists' performances. Furthermore, there are no evaluation techniques described in the literature for such purposes.

Children typically meet school psychologists because they are involved in an assessment process. The school psychologist's role is to elicit children's optimal test performance. A number of variables may influence the testing process. One factor is that of rapport. School psychologists are aware of the importance of establishing a positive relationship to facilitate a child's best efforts. Most testing handbooks make an attempt at suggesting techniques for working with children in building rapport. Yet there are no standardized procedures for school psycholgists to follow.

All examiners generally spend some time with a child prior to the administration of an intelligence test. They want the child to adjust quickly to the testing situation. Feedback to the school psychologists that they have successfully established positive rapport comes in subtle ways: a cooperative manner, uncritical nature, polite comments and conforming to the required tasks. Whether or not school psychologists have been successful, however, is typically not formally assessed.

In the current study consideration was given to the development of conditions that would facilitate the acquisition of positive rapport. A semi-structured interview which extended the amount of time typically spent in establishing rapport and conversations which focused on children's perspectives of their world was evaluated by the children. This study assumed that the extra time and type of conversation created familiarity.

Interviewing

In this section investigations are described which support the treatment chosen for this study. This treatment is a modified version of an assessment interview. The following studies provide the foundation and theoretical context for the development of this interview. The review is divided into three sections: value of the interview, reliability and validity, and technical aspects. A descriptive presentation of the advantages of the interview affirms the value of obtaining a child's perceptions. The section on reliability and validity supports the integrity of the interview as a vehicle for establishing pretest contact. Finally, the review of the technical aspects of the interview provides the basis for the structure and format of the interview used for this study.

The Value of the Interview

Yarrow (1960) conducted extensive studies on the assessment child interview. He described the interview as having multiple uses: data collection, research, experimental study, and assessment. The data Yarrow believed to be valuable for assessment purposes were the children's views of their home and school environments and significant adults as well as their perceptions of their world. The interview permits the examiner to clarify questions which he/she perceives the child has misunderstood and to assess the child's level of receptive and expressive skills. Yarrow asserted that the interview's strength was the validity of the data due to the positive influence of the personal relationship.

In 1968, Rutter and Graham (1968) developed a short standardized psychiatric interview which assessed the nature and extent of a child's psychiatric disorder. With the introduction of the structured interview, researchers were able to maintain the advantages of the interview while increasing its reliability and validity. By standardizing the content and process of the interview, the data obtained from the interview were shown to be more reliable and valid. Rutter and Graham contended that children were actually better reporters of their emotional and interpersonal relationships than the significant adults around them.

O'Leary and Johnson (1979) pointed out that understanding how the child views significant events which have taken place and how the child perceives that he/she handled these events, feelings, and frustrations has diagnostic use. Gresham (1982) acknowledged these advantages and further showed the importance of assessing the extent to which children understood that their particular problems were causing problems for those around them. Pascal (1983) contended that obtaining the child's perception of the environment, via the interview, was necessary for formulating treatment plans.

Kratochwill (1982) predicted that in the future the psychological interview would be utilized more consistently. He acknowledged that caution must be used due to possible subjective interpretations and the use of unstandardized procedures; however, he specified several positive features of the interview. The interview can be used to obtain general and detailed information; it promotes a personal relationship; it offers greater confidentiality; and it allows for modification of questions or clarification of responses.

More recently the value of the structured interview has been demonstrated through its continued use in the clinical and mental health fields (Dean, 1984). Murphy (1985) believed that the school psychologist's role throughout the 1980s would involve an increasing amount of interviewing. School psychologists would be required to prove their competency in this area. Currently there are several structured interviews, but these forms are exclusively used in clinical settings and only for the more seriously disturbed child. To date no standardized interviews are used in school-based assessments. Without structured interviews, school psychologists are left to develop their own personal style of interviewing.

Reliability and Validity of the Interview

The basic assumptions of the assessment interview are (a) that the interview schedule utilized is a reliable and valid method of collecting data (Spitzer & Endicott, 1973) and (b) that children are reliable reporters (Rutter & Graham, 1968). The purpose of this section is to provide information which supports the integrity of the interview as an appropriate procedure to facilitate the desirable outcomes of this study.

Historically, the interview was the primary method of gathering information; but with the advent of the scientific method, researchers began to reject the interview due to its subjective nature and lack of standardization. The variability among interviewers regarding the process and content of the interview resulted in low reliability and validity of the data (Spitzer & Endicott, 1973).

In the 1930s, results of empirical studies began to support the interview as a technique for obtaining relevant and reliable data. The investigators attempted to develop methods to eliminate bias in interviewing (Matarazzo, 1978). Researchers such as Kanner (1935) and Lewis (1934) were among the earliest to realize the need for the development of uniform clinical procedures to improve reliability. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s there was continuing development of models and refinements by these and other investigators to standardize interview procedures.

Yarrow (1960) provided a systematic and theoretical framework for conducting interviews with children. He investigated such variables as the child's age, the child's language ability, and the sex of both the child and the examiner. He further researched methodological considerations such as question sequence, degree of structure, length of interview, and data analysis. By the 1960s and 1970s numerous investigators were developing standardized interview schedules (Goodman, 1972; Goodman & Sours, 1967; Werkman, 1965; Wiens, 1976; Yarrow, 1960) focusing on improving reliability and validity.

The question of the examiner's ability to distinguish a disturbed child from a nondisturbed child based on data from an interview schedule has been the source of several investigations. In 1968, Rutter and Graham designed and tested a one-half hour interview schedule for children ages seven through twelve. They concluded that the interview was "a reasonably sensitive diagnostic instrument which could give rise to reliable and valid judgements on whether the child exhibited any psychiatric disorders" (Rutter, & Graham, 1968, p. 576). These findings were further supported by Berg and Fielding (1979) who demonstrated a satisfactory level of interrater reliability on 7 of 10 behavioral variables evaluated during a child interview.

Differential diagnosis was further evaluated by Herjanic and Campbell (1977). They concluded that during interviews with disturbed populations of children, significantly more symptoms would be exhibited than with the nondisturbed population of children. This conclusion was similar to the findings of Rutter, Tizard, and Whitmore (1970), who showed that the more symptoms a child exhibits during an interview the higher the probability the child needs psychological assistance.

The second important consideration is the credibility of the information reported by the child. The prevailing attitude during the 1930s and 1940s was that children were not reliable sources of information and that their thought processes were elusive and escaped description (Goodman & Sours, 1967). However by the 1970s there was a growing acceptance of children's responses.

Herjanic, Herjanic, Brown, and Wheatt (1975) conducted a study in which they attempted to assess the reliabiity of responses from children. The researchers found an 80% average agreement between 50 children, six to sixteen years of age, and their mothers on comparable structured interviews, concluding that children were reliable reporters. O'Leary and Johnson (1979) noted that the structured interview, when administered by trained personnel, could provide data which had administrative and diagnostic use.

Studies on the validity of the interview have produced mixed results. The predictive validity studies most frequently cited are those conducted by Hunt and his co-workers throughout the 1950s (Hunt, 1951; Hunt, 1955; Hunt, Herrmann, & Noble, 1957). Their investigations involved the validity of psychiatric diagnosis of military personnel. Their studies cited evidence of the success of the interview in differentiating psychiatric categories as measured by follow-up military history. A study by Plag and Arthur (1965) provided further evidence of the predictive validity of the interview for broad discriminations between groups. The results of studies requiring finer clinical judgments with healthy subjects, however, failed to find evidence of predictive validity.

In conclusion, the reliability of the interview has been shown to be adequate due to improvements in diagnostic classifications (Nuttall & Ivey, 1986), more uniform clinical procedures (Houck, & Hansen, 1972), and training and research on interview variables such as the subject, the interviewer, and the scoring (Fleiss, 1970). The validity of the interview appears most valid with broad discriminations. Despite limitations, the interview is recognized as a valuable procedure for collecting relevant and accurate information.

The Technical Aspects of the Interview

In 1979 Burke and DeMers proposed a model to systematically evaluate the technical aspects of the assessment interview. They suggested the following dimensions: degree of structure, response options, and content. This model was developed for use by school psychologists to evaluate their own style of interviewing. Burke and DeMers (1979) stated that the three dimensions would account for the format and structure of the majority of assessment interviews. With one minor alteration, most of the relevant research on the technical aspects of the interview, reviewed for the purposes of this study, can be divided into the three dimensions.

The alteration involves substituting process issues for response options. The response options focused on the type of responses made by the examinee as influenced by the type of statements made by the examiner. The broader label of process issues could incorporate both examiner and examinee's responses.

Degree of structure. Structure has to do with the degree to which the wording and the sequence of the questions have been predetermined (Wiens, 1976). Interviews fall under one of three classifications of structure: structured, unstructured, or semi-structured.

In the structured interview format the questions to be asked have been decided prior to the interview. The interviewer asks each question exactly as it is worded and in its predetermined sequence (Wiens, 1976). Although this format reduces the flexibility of the interview, the data collected is considered useful for research purposes (Houck & Hansen, 1972). The interview schedule is considered to have more reliability and validity. It also can facilitate a comprehensive coverage of topics in an assessment interview (Burke & DeMers, 1979; Wiens, 1976).

The unstructured interview format provides a more individualized and spontaneous approach. It tends to follow the lead of the interviewee's or, in this case, the child's statements (Burke & DeMers, 1979). The flexibility of this format can encourage in-depth discussion of topics since there is less need to focus the child's attention on an agenda of items within a particular session (Kadushin, 1983; Wiens, 1976). Some researchers regard this approach as producing data which are more valid than that of the other two approaches due to the focus on the establishment of a personal relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee (Kadushin, 1983; Maccoby & Maccoby, 1954). It should be noted, however, that this approach lacks standard procedures; thus, some question its reliability and validity (Burke & DeMers, 1979).

The semi-structured interview consists of a list of predetermined general questions and topics, yet the interviewer has the flexibility to determine the sequence and wording of the questions and topics of discussion (Burke & DeMers, 1979). The list is a guide. It increases the probability that certain topics will be introduced and addressed. This format offers the advantages of flexibility, yet insures that specific information will receive attention (Wiens, 1976).

Since Rutter and Graham (1968) developed their semi-structured interview schedule, several instruments have been created for the purpose of making psychiatric diagnoses (Korchin & Schuldberg, 1981). Among these are the Kiddie-Schedule for Affective Disorders and Schizophrenia (Chambers, Puig-Antich, & Tabrizi, 1970), the Children's Psychiatric Inventory (Herjanic et al., 1975), the Mental

Health Assessment Form, (Kestenbaum & Bird, 1978) and The Interview Schedule for Children (Kovacs, Betof, Celebre, Mansheim, Petty, & Raynak, 1979).

These instruments were reviewed by Paget (1984) for possible utilization in school-based assessments. To determine the potential use of these structured interviews in the school setting, they were evaluated in terms of their purpose, format, content, administration time, age range and scoring system. Paget acknowledged that, although each of these interview schedules had been developed for specific clinical or experimental research and for the severely disturbed populations of children found in the psychiatric setting, the interview schedules could provide a basis for developing procedures for school-based interview schedules.

A more recent structured interview is the Child Assessment Schedule (CAS) (Hodges, Kline, Stern, Cytryn, & McKnew, 1982). The CAS was designed as a psychiatric tool to secure information required in making a DSM III diagnosis (LaGreca, 1983). The CAS demonstrated adequate validity, reliability and utility for the more severely disturbed child. This schedule requires forty-five minutes to administer, contains 75 questions and is designed for research purposes within a clinical setting. The CAS has not been used for school-based assessments.

The three types of structure represent one dimension of the interview. The structure chosen will influence both the response options and the content. In order to effectively choose the type of structure, the examiner should consider the purpose of the interview, the required data and the interviewer's theoretical orientation (Yarrow, 1960).

In the present study a semi-structured interview was used to facilitate the development of a personal relationship. The data obtained from the interview was general information regarding the child. The primary goal was to establish familiarity between the examiner and the examinee.

Process issues. The second dimension of the assessment interview is that of the process issues involved in the interview. Process issues refer to aspects of how to communicate, both verbally and nonverbally, and how to facilitate learning as much as possible about the child (Greenspan, 1981). For instance, there are many conditions of an effective interview which can be established or lost through the choice of an examiner's response or manner in communicating.

Burke and DeMers (1979) investigated how the examiner's type of question, statement or lead influenced the type of response made by the examinee. The authors classified responses into three categories: closed-response-option, open-response-option; and mixed-response-option. A closed-reponse-option occurs when more than two-thirds of the response options are predetermined; an open-response-option implies that more than two-thirds of the response options are not predetermined; and a mixed-response-option involves more than one-third closed and more than one-third open. For example, close-ended questions typically require simple one or two word responses, while open-response-options facilitate more discussion. The closed-response-option was seen by Wiggins (1973) as being associated with high reliability and validity. Cannell and Kahn (1968), however, question this assumption. They pointed out the possibility that some data could be missed due to the nature of the format.

Yarrow's (1960) classification system focused on the types of responses made by the examiner. Yarrow categorized questions into three types: direct, indirect, and projective. Direct questions were usually used to obtain factual information, whereas indirect questions were used to assess feelings and attitudes. Projective questions were used to address difficult subjects by discussing hypothetical situations.

Specific interview techniques designed to maximize the communication process with children were researched by Kanfer et al. (1983), Nuttall and Ivey (1986), Simmons (1981), and Goodman and Sours (1967). Kanfer et al. (1983) provided five techniques to facilitate communication with children during an interview. They proposed that the interviewer make descriptive and reflective statements, utilize praise, avoid critical statements, and use open-ended questions. Nuttall and Ivey (1986) introduced a few fundamental communication skills: open and closed questions, encouraging statements, paraphrasing, reflection of feeling, and summarization.

Simmons (1981) commented on communication, encouraging a focus on "how" or "what" questions while avoiding "why" questions. The most detailed analysis of the technical aspects of the interview was provided by Goodman and Sours (1967). Regarding the process issue, they proposed the following strategies: speak slowly and in simple sentences, use rhetorical questions, use the subjunctive case, modulate the voice, use appropriate grammar, proceed from general to more specific comments, alternate between questions and comments, and ask questions which do not imply a particular response.

In addition, when formulating questions for children, Yarrow (1960) stressed the need for the questions to be understood by the child and have the same meaning when used with different children. Kanfer et al. (1983) gave consideration to the age appropriateness of verbal responses by interviewers. Greenspan (1981) went as far as to say that "what" the interviewer said was not as important as "how" the interviewer said it. He also stressed the importance of following the child's lead.

Finally, the sequence of responses has been considered. Yarrow (1960) refers to either a funnel or an inverted funnel approach. This means that questions flow from general to specific or, for some children, begin with the specific and end with more general questions. For example, with a young child an examiner may wish to include more direct questions to facilitate verbal expression. In deciding the sequence the examiner must consider the child's expressive abilities, comfort level and general demeanor. The appropriate sequence could help establish a positive, supportive interview.

The overall goal is to reflect to the child, via the responses made by the examiner, that he or she understands the child's way of thinking (Yarrow, 1960). Wiens (1976) extended this notion and suggested that the responses need to reflect an understanding of both the factual information and the associated feelings. He stated: "The most often preferred response is a brief interviewer comment which can put together several of the feelings or attitudes that have been expressed" (Wiens, 1976, p. 15).

In the preceding review ways are identified to enhance communication. The semi-structured interview used in this study incorporated direct, open-ended, reflective and descriptive responses. The questions proceeded from the specific to general within each topic area discussed. Directions required the examiner to modulate the voice, speak slowly, and smile. The examiner was instructed to be aware of the child's comfort level, general demeanor and expressive abilities throughout the interview.

Content issues. The third dimension of the interview deals with the content issues involved in the interview. An analysis of the literature pertaining to content issues provides data which can be divided into three areas of study: content stages, list of topics within each stage, and the sequence of the topics. Each of these three content variables directly influences the structure and the process-options which, in turn, affect the obtained information.

Content stage is the extent to which the interview is divided into sections. Studies have been done on the technical aspects of the interview. Most of them seem to divide the content into three stages. For example, Werkman (1965) identified the following three stages: (a) play, (b) testing, and (c) termination. He argued that the first and major stage, play, was critical to the success of the interview. The next stage was described as a period of exploration and discussion of a child's concerns by utilizing semi-projective techniques. The final or termination stage consisted of a summary of the interview and a discussion of plans for the future.

Although Goodman (1972) also specified three stages, the procedure varied. The first third of the interview involved observations and an exploratory discussion resulting in narrowing the interviewer's focus. The procedures of the second stage involved a combination of testing hypotheses and obtaining more specific information. The last third consisted of obtaining information regarding the child's perception of relevant issues.

A more detailed analysis of the procedural stages was formulated by Nuttall and Ivey (1986). They listed the following five stages: (a) building rapport, (b) defining the problem, (c) determining outcomes, (d) generating alternatives, and (e) summarizing and following up on plans. These five stages frame the session, providing a guideline to aid the examiner in conducting the interview.

As demonstrated, the interview may be divided into several different stages. Because these stages are only guidelines, they will vary from one interview to the next. Most authors stressed the importance of preparation and flexibility to flow back and forth between stages to facilitate rapport. Next, consideration is given to the variety of possible topics to cover in the assessment interview.

A presentation of all the possible topics would be endless. Most authors agree that the breadth and the number of topics covered vary according to the goals of the assessment interview.

Kanfer and Saslow (1965, 1969), two of the earlier investigators, developed a highly comprehensive approach to interviewing. These authors conceived of a system covering seven topics: initial analysis of the problem situation, clarification of the problem situation, motivational analysis, developmental analysis of client and problem behavior, analysis of client's self-control abilities, analysis of social relationships, and analysis of the social-cultural-physical environment. Later, Kanfer et al. (1983) organized these topics into three major areas: (a) children's perceptions of their environment, (b) perception of self, and (c) perception of the identified problem. The broad view faciliates gathering most of the relevant information.

Greenspan (1981) looked at the topics from two levels: descriptive level and age-appropriate level. The authors attempted to secure an accurate description of the child and assess the information with regard to the child's developmental age. There were seven topic areas: physical integrity, emotional tone, affect and anxieties, thematic development, the child's relationship to the interviewer, the child's use of the environment, and the interviewer's subjective feelings. This list, although less comprehensive than the lists of other investigators, is more specific in its identification of topics.

Houck and Hansen (1972) provided a detailed comprehensive framework within three stages of the diagnostic interview. Within the initial phase of the interview they indexed seven topic areas: precontact factors, physical setting, greeting and seating, observation and initial assessment, opening of the interview, patient's statement of the problem, and establishment of goals. Each of these seven areas was explicitly outlined and the implications for assessment presented. The middle stage outlined six topic areas and the termination stage was considered critical to the success of the interview. The authors felt that these interview topics would be appropriate in most types of interviewing regardless of the interviewers' theoretical perspectives.

An advantage to a structured interview is the list of topics or guidelines given to the examiner. This list ensures comprehensive coverage of relevant topics. One example is the list of topics covered in the Children Assessment Schedule (Hodges et al., 1982). The topics covered are school, friends, activities, family, fears and anxieties, worries and concerns, self-image, mood and behavior, physical complaints, acting out, and reality testing. The observational judgment section covers insight, grooming, motor coordination, activity level, attention span, impulsivity , estimates of cognitive abilities, quality of verbal communication, quality of emotional expression, physical movements and behavior, and impressions about quality of interpersonal interactions. By using a standardized interview schedule, examiners have a format that helps to elicit information to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the child.

Sequential variations of topics influence rapport and the validity of the data (Kanfer et al., 1983; Yarrow, 1960). As with the reponse options, Yarrow recommends either a funnel or an inverted funnel approach depending on the individual child. Yarrow and others (Gorden, 1980; Kanfer et. al., 1983) support proceeding from the positive, less threatening topics to the more threatening ones. The more sensitive the topic, the more the examiner has had to establish a strong positive relationship. In the unstructured or semi-structured interview the examiner has the flexibility to move back to less threatening topics if the child appears overwhelmed.

Summary

This chapter has provided a review of the related literature on interviewing, examiner familiarity, and children's perceptions. It has established that testing is an important component in an assessment process. The effective and accurate results of a comprehensive evaluation influence important educational decisions. Therefore, if a test is to serve its function those variables which may influence the test must be acknowledged and systematically controlled.

Examiner familiarity and children's perceptions have been demonstrated to have an effect on test performance. Common to both areas of investigation is the absence of procedures to establish conditions which may facilitate familiarity or positive perceptions.

A wide diversity of opinions exists as to the choice of interview content stages, topics, and sequence. The particular content selected for this study reflects the purpose and goals of the interview. There were three stages: Stage I, Rapport Building; Stage II, Questioning; and Stage III, Terminating. The topics chosen reflect the work of Kanfer et al. (1983), with the exclusion of the identified problem. Thus, the topics included children's perceptions of their environment and themselves. Threatening topics were not discussed and the goals of the interview were to form an acquaintance and elicit information on the child's perceptions of the identified topics.

This presentation has addressed the complexity and influences of the technical aspects of the interview. The kind of information obtained during the interview is directly influenced by the choice of structure, response options, and content. These choices will be influenced further by the overall goals of the interview, the information required, and the theoretical perspective of the interviewer (Burke & DeMers, 1979). It was with this information that a semi-structured interview was developed for the purposes of this study.

CHAPTER III
METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to investigate whether a semi-structured interview could affect the test performance and perceptions of elementary school children. Specifically, the effectiveness of a semi-structured interview designed to promote examiner familiarity with second and third grade children referred for special evaluation was assessed by comparing performance of a treatment and a control group on the WISC-R and the Children's Perception Rating Profile.

Selection of Participants for the Study

Population and Sample

There are approximately 102,000 children enrolled in the Duval County Public School System. Of these there are 8,981 second and 8,451 third grade elementary school children. For the 1987/88 academic year there were 1,028 second and 960 third grade referrals, and within this group there were 323 second and 258 third grade academic referrals. The population for this study consisted of second and third grade students who had been referred for testing evaluation by a Child Study Team (CST).

The Duval County Public School System is the seventh largest school district in the United States. Located in northern Florida, it is one of sixty-seven school systems in the state of Florida. Duval's system has a total of 142 schools: 96 elementary, 35 secondary, 4 exceptional, 3 skill centers, and 4 special schools.

Each of 96 elementary schools has a CST which conducts a review of children referred for assessments. The team typically consists of the school psychologist, the school guidance counselor, a social worker, a federal representative, the child's teacher, and the principal of the school. When the CST authorizes testing, the child's name is placed on a computerized list of all students in the county to be tested.

The following criteria were used to determine the eligibility of children for inclusion in this study: (a) currently enrolled in either second or third grade and (b) referred because of academic difficulties. Variables such as sex and race reflected Duval County Public school's school population. Children who had been previously referred for psychological or educational evaluations were excluded from the study to eliminate any practice effect.

The following procedures were implemented to select a random sample of forty children. The researcher constructed a list for each of the school psychologists participating in the study. This list contained names of children who had been assigned to them for testing and who were either in second or third grade. They had been referred because of academic problems. From each of the school psychologists' lists of referrals, four children were randomly selected for the sample. Each child was then randomly assigned to either the treatment or the control group. Using a table of random numbers, two children were assigned to an experimental group (n=20) and two were assigned to a control group (n=20). Therefore, the sample consisted of a total of forty students who were referred for testing by school psychologists during the spring of 1988. The sample of subjects in the treatment group consisted of 14 males, 6 females, and 6 blacks, 13 whites. There was one East Indian child. Their ages ranged from 11 yr-9 mo to 8 yr-6 mo with a mean of 9 yr-6 mo. There were 17 third graders and 3 second graders. In the control group there were 13 males, 7 females, and 5 black, 14 whites. There was one Asian American child. Their ages ranged from 11 yr-1 mo to 8 yr-7 mo with a mean of 9 yr-5 mo. Fifteen were third graders and five were second graders.

School Psychologists

School psychologists in the Duval County Public School System are involved in activities such as assessment, consultation, parent training, curriculum planning, and counseling. Assessment, however, is the most prevalent function. The Duval County Public Schools' psychologists who conduct assessments are required to have at least a masters degree and be certified by the state of Florida.

The School Psychology Department of Duval County Public Schools provided the names of all thirty school psychologists presently working in the county. They were invited, by the head of the department, to attend a group meeting where the study was described briefly and their participation was elicited. They were informed of the estimated time commitment and the training needed to use the semi-structured interview (SSI), as designed by the investigator.

Ten school psychologists volunteered to participate in the study. All ten had at least three years of experience in the administration and scoring of the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised and agreed to administer all experimental conditions as outlined in the study. Demographic characteristics of the school psychologists were secured from a questionnaire given to each school psychologist during the training session. The sample of examiners consisted of 7 females, 3 males, and 7 whites, 3 blacks. Their years of experience ranged from 2 to 17 years and their ages ranged from 27 to 62 years. The majority of examiners held a masters degree (8). One examiner held a specialist degree in education and another a doctorate of philosophy in counselor education.

Experimental Design

The experimental design in this study was a posttest-only control group design. It was used to investigate whether a semi-structured interview designed to faciliate examiner familiarity could influence the level of a child's test performance, as measured by the WISC-R, and his/her perception of a school psychologist and his/her test performance. The students were randomly assigned to either treatment or control group; those who received the semi-structured interview prior to testing (E1), and those who did not (E2). The WISC-R was administered to both groups by certified school psychologists. The Children's Perception Rating Profile was administered to both groups by the student's school guidance counselors after the administration of the WISC-R.

A primary reason for choosing this design was due to the concern regarding test interaction and to facilitate the collection of data within a reasonable time period. The experimental design featured random assignment of subjects to the two groups. It was used in an attempt to control for history, maturation, testing, instrumentation, regression, selection, and the interaction of selection and maturation (Campbell & Stanley, 1963). A threat to internal validity that might have been a problem was that of mortality of subjects. In this study there were eleven school psychologists who agreed to participate. Due to imcomplete data, one of the school psychologists was eliminated from the study. However, ten was the minimum number of school psychologists required; thus, mortality was not a factor in this study.

The WISC-R was chosen because of its widespread use in psychological evaluations and its strong reliability and satisfactory validity. If the WISC-R was administered a second time within a short period of time, any increases in scores could be discredited due to the practice effect.

This design also ruled out the possible interaction between the pretest and the experimental treatment. Thus, the results of this study can be generalized to groups who do not receive the pretest (Borg & Gall, 1979). The research design is illustrated in Figure 1.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant difference between experimental groups E1 and E2 on test performance, as measured by the WISC-R.

2. There will be no significant difference between experimental groups E1 and E2 on children's perceptions of school psychologists, as measured by the Children's Perception Rating Profile.

POSTTEST-ONLY CONTROL GROUP DESIGN

R (E1) X O_1 O_2

R (E2) O_1 O_2

R = Random assignment of children

E1= Treatment Group

E2= Control group

X = Semi-Structured Interview

O_1= Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children -Revised

O_2= The Children's Perception Rating Profile

Figure 1. Experimental Design

3. There will be no significant difference between experimental groups E1 and E2 on children's perceptions of their test performances on the WISC-R, as measured by the Children's Perception Rating Profile.

The Semi-Structured Interview (SSI)

Drawing upon the literature on familiarity and interviewing (e.g., Fuchs et al., 1983; Hodges et al., 1982; Paget, 1984), a semi-structured interview (SSI) was developed by the researcher. The SSI was designed to be used with second and third grade elementary school children. In addition to eliciting information that could be used in assessment of a child, it served the purpose of establishing familiarity with an examiner prior to taking a standardized test.

The SSI takes approximately one-half hour to administer. It consists of 24 questions concerning school, family, peers, and emotional functioning. An outline of the semi-structured interview is shown in Appendix A.

The SSI is practical, considering the schedules and time constraints of most school psychologists. Typically, school psychologists visit each of their assigned schools once a week, usually to conduct student assessments. The SSI was conducted by the school psychologists in a private area of the school. This same room was used for testing the following week.

Play activities continued throughout the half-hour interview. The toys used were limited to two or three puppets which were placed within reach of the children. The tape the school psychologists viewed during training showed a child holding and manipulating a puppet throughout the interview. The intent was to give the children something to help them feel at ease.

There are three stages of the SSI: (a) Rapport Building, (b) Questioning, and (c) Terminating. Specific tasks and strategies are outlined for each stage. Some may overlap among the three stages.

Stage I: Rapport Building

Rapport building begins when a school psychologist first meets a child and ends when the child is returned to the classroom. The specific tasks associated with this initial stage were as follows: immediately engage the child in nonthreatening conversation and initiate play activites. For example, the school psychologist may begin by asking the child what activities he/she was involved in before leaving the classroom. The school psychologist may introduce the puppets and ask the child some introductory questions. For instance: "Can you tell me what feelings you have about coming with me today?" The structure of the interview tends to ease potential anxieties of students (Kanfer et al., 1983).

Stage II: Questioning

The primary goal of the second stage is to show the child that the school psychologist is interested in his/her world (Yarrow, 1960). The strategy involved is to obtain the child's perception of the following areas: school, family, peers, and self. Specific questions are asked to obtain this information. The school psychologists can combine their knowledge of child development, communication skills and motivation to facilitate the child's self-expression (Murphy, 1985). In addition, the school psychologists are encouraged to incorporate statements which reflect feelings and summarize content. For example: "You've told me a lot about yourself: you're in third grade; you like art; and you have a good friend. What does it feel like to have a friend?"

Stage III: Terminating

The goals of this final stage are to acknowledge the child's effort, summarize the content of the conversation, and discuss how the obtained information will be used (Kanfer et al., 1983). For example: "You've really helped me get to know you. We've talked about school, your family and friends and how you feel in different situations . . . etc." During this stage the school psychologist prepares the child for the end of the session.

The interview process is considered semi-structured because the child is asked a set of questions presented in a general sequence and order (see Appendix A). Yet the school psychologists can make comments or ask other questions when appropriate. The questions in the SSI tend to move from specific to more general.

The SSI was the experimental variable for the study and was experienced by the treatment group E1. The control group (E2) did not meet with school psychologists prior to the administration of the standardized test (WISC-R).

School Psychologists' Training

All school psychologists who participated in the study were trained to administer the SSI. The school psychologists received one hour of training in one session two weeks prior to implementation of the experimental conditions of the study.

Sorenson and Pickett (1986) empirically tested various strategies for teaching interviewing skills to individuals. They concluded that individuals who evaluate videotaped interviews on specific behaviors and skills for two hours developed effective interview performance. This study employed a modified version of their instructional strategy to teach school psychologists how to use the SSI.

The school psychologists received approximately one hour of training. The first twenty minutes consisted of an overview on interviewing. They then were asked to review and evaluate a fifteen minute interview training tape. The tape which the school psychologists evaluated was an interview conducted by a local mental health professional. It was developed by the researcher and showed an interview with an 8-year-old child. It approximated the type of interview required of the school psychologists for this study. The evaluation form which the school psychologists used during the rating was designed by the researcher. The form required the school psychologists to rate specifically identified behaviors and skills associated with effective interview performance (see Appendix B).

Following the taped interview, the group discussed their evaluations and received instructions on the procedures for the study. The school psychologists met again one week prior to the implementation of the study for a half-hour and received detailed instructions on the procedures.

Instruments

Two research instruments were used in this study. The WISC-R focused on evaluating children's test performance. The Children's Perception Rating Profile assessed children's perceptions of their own test performance and interactions with the school psychologists.

Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children-Revised (WISC-R)

In 1949 David Wechsler developed the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children. In 1974 he revised and restandardized this scale, referring to it as the WISC-R. The WISC-R is an individually administered intelligence test. The WISC-R takes approximately 50 to 75 minutes to administer and is designed for use with children ages six through sixteen. The WISC-R consists of twelve tests: six on the verbal scale (information, similarities, arithmetic, vocabulary, comprehension and digit span) and six on the performance scale (picture completion, picture arrangement, block design, object assembly, coding, and mazes). The ten subtests used to compute the full-scale score were administered by each school psychologist.

The standardization sample consisted of 2,200 normal children between the ages of six and a half through sixteen and a half. The 1970 U.S. Census provided the data from which the sample was stratified on the basis of age, sex, race, geographic region, and occupational group of head of household, and urban-rural residence. A total of 202 examiners in thirty-two states administered the WISC-R between December 1971 and January 1973 (WISC-R manual, 1974).

The internal-consistency reliability (split-half) for all but two subtests (Coding and Digit Span) as well as verbal, performance and full scale IQs are reported in the WISC-R manual. The average coefficients reported for the verbal, performance and full scale IQs are .94, .90, and .96, respectively. The average coefficients for the subtests range from .70 to .86. These reported coefficients are considered high. The test-retest reliabilities for Coding and Digit Span range from .63 to .84 (Vernon, 1984).

The concurrent validity of the WISC-R was assessed by determining the relationship between the WISC-R and the following three intelligence tests: The Wechsler Preschool and Primary Scale of Intelligence (WPPSI), the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale (WAIS), and the Stanford-Binet Intelligence Scale. The correlation between Full Scale IQ on the WISC-R and the WPPSI was .82. The Full Scale IQ of the WAIS and the WISC-R had a .95 correlation. The coefficients of correlation of the Stanford-Binet IQs and WISC-R verbal, performance, and full-scale IQs were .71, .60, and .73, respectively (Salvia & Ysseldyke, 1981). Overall the research suggests high reliability and adequate validity for the WISC-R.

The WISC-R was used to determine the level of measured intelligence of the forty children in this study. One week elapsed between the administration of the semi-structured interview and the testing session. The WISC-R was chosen because of its widespread usage in psychological evaluations and its reliability and validity. Each school psychologist scored all protocols immediately following administration. For the purposes of this study, the Full Scale IQ score, the Verbal IQ and Performance IO scores were used for analysis.

Children's Perception Rating Profile (CPRP)

Drawing upon the literature on children's subjective ratings, the Children's Perception Rating Profile (CPRP) was developed by the researcher (See Appendix C). The CPRP was designed to be used with second and third grade children. It enabled children to report their perceptions of a school psychologist and of their own test performance. The following factors were considered in the construction of the CPRP: reading comprehension, conceptual levels, the competence of the children to make judgments, and their ability to distinguish among response items. The CPRP is a "paper and pencil" self-report questionnaire which takes approximatley 15 minutes to administer. The CPRP consists of 13 items in a Likert-type format with a scale of 1-5 where 1=strongly agree and 5=strongly disagree. In Section A the children's perception of the relationship established with the school psychologists was assessed. In Section B the children's perceptions of their test performances was assessed.

To determine the test's validity, three independent consultants with approximately the same level of expertise in research and working with children were given the questionnaire. The objectives and goals of the survey were presented, and the consultants were then asked to determine the degree to which the questionnaire met these goals and objectives. The CPRP was judged to have satisfactory content validity.

Due to the nature of the questions asked on the CPRP, in order to assess test-retest reliability the exact procedures of the study had to be replicated. For a child to answer the items on the CPRP, a testing session and individual contact with a school psychologist had to have taken place. Each subject was initially given the CPRP immediately following the administration of the WISC-R by the school guidance counselor. The counselor gave a second administration of the CPRP 4 to 5 consecutive days later. Test-retest reliability (Pearson product moment correlations) was examined for all subjects during the implementation of the experiment. Results indicated that the correlation of the paired scores was .77. It was concluded that the correlation was sufficiently high to justify straightforward interpretations of the CPRP given that it does not reflect error due to low test-retest reliability

Experimental Procedures and Collection of Data

Permission to conduct the study was secured from Duval County Public Schools. After receiving approval, the researcher required approximately six weeks to implement the study. During the first two weeks of the study, the sample of children who participated in the study were identified. They were randomly assigned to a treatment condition.

During the second week, the school psychologists received training in the implementation of the semi-structured interview and exact procedures for administration of the experimental conditions. Next, they were asked to practice the administration of the semi-structured interview with a child they were already scheduled to see.

To help the school psychologists with the implementation of the study during the third week they attended a meeting in which the procedures were again reviewed. Each school psychologist received a packet with the following papers enclosed: (a) Procedures Sheet (see Appendix D), (b) Demographic Characteristics Sheet (see Appendix E), (c) Scheduling Sheet (see Appendix F), (d) two SSI Summary Sheets (see Appendix G), (e) 4 WISC-R Summary Sheets (see Appendix H), and (f) two Semi-Structured Interview Forms (see Appendix A).

During the fourth week of the study, the twenty children in the treatment group met with their respective school pscyhologists. Each child was introduced to a assigned school psychologist by the child's classroom teacher. The child was then escorted to a room which was used for conducting the SSI, and where the WISC-R and the Children's Perception Rating Profile were administered the following week. The school psychologist and the child met for one-half hour during which time the examiner conducted the semi-structured interview. The specific objectives, materials, procedures, and interview questions are outlined in Appendix A.

This meeting provided the children with an opportunity to become familiar with the school psychologist. Each of these twenty children then met the same examiner during the fifth week and was given the WISC-R. The time immediately preceding the administration of the WISC-R was between 5 and 10 minutes as suggested in the WISC-R manual. The school psychologists administered the WISC-R according to the standard instructions provided in the manual.

The school guidance counselor administered the Children's Perception Rating Profile following the testing session. The counselor read each of the items to the child, allowing sufficient time before preceding to the next item. The child was assured of confidentiality of his/her responses. The school guidance counselor had been given instructions to place the completed form in an envelope provided by the school psychologist. The school psychologist completed the WISC-R summary form as part of the administration of the CPRP and then placed it in the envelope with the CPRP and returned it to the school psychology department.

Each of the school psychologists also administered the WISC-R to two additional children during the fifth week.

These twenty children (E2) had not received the semi-structured interview during the fourth week of the study. The time immediately preceding the administration of the WISC-R was between 5 and 10 minutes as suggested in the WISC-R manual. Following the testing session the school psychologists asked the counselor to administer the Children's Perception Rating Profile. The guidance counselor followed the procedures described above.

The last week of the study involved the follow-up administration of the CPRP by the guidance counselor. The counselor was provided with a pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelcpe which was mailed directly to the investigator.

Data Analysis

The data yielded by the posttest measures of the WISC-R of the experimental and the control group were analyzed by doing a *t*-test comparison of means. A multivariate *t*-test, Hotelling's T^2 was conducted on the Children's Perception Rating Profile. This statistical test was used due to the assumed correlation among the questions. Adjustments for the correlations were made and the obtained *T* was transformed into a *F* value to assess significance. This statistical test compared the two groups to determine if there was a difference between E1 and E2.

CHAPTER IV
RESULTS

The goal of this study was to determine whether a semi-structured interview could affect the test performance and perceptions of exceptional children. The results of the study are presented in two sections. In the first section the results pertinent to test performance are addressed; while in the second section, data regarding perceptions of children are outlined.

Test Performance

Analysis of Hypothesis I

The null hypothesis relating to the effect of the SSI on the test scores was not rejected.

Ho#1: There will be no significant difference
between experimental groups E1 and E2 on
test performance as measured by the WISC-R.

Using a randomized, posttest only control group design, the treatment and control groups were administered the WISC-R. The posttest scores of the treatment group and the control group for the Verbal, Performance and Full Scale are reported in Table 1. Each school psychologist tested four children; this is indicated by the line drawn after every

Table 1

WISC-R Scores for Treatment and Control Group

(n=40)

Treatment (n=20)					Control (n=20)			
Subjects		F	V	P	Subjects	F	V	P
Sch.	Psy							
1.	1.	85	87	86	1.	113	113	111
	2.	91	87	98	2.	80	88	87
2.	3.	98	79	121	3.	76	79	77
	4.	95	90	102	4.	93	92	96
3	5.	105	102	109	5.	92	88	100
	6.	81	86	78	6.	123	140	101
4.	7.	96	82	114	7.	102	100	105
	8.	90	86	96	8.	105	102	109
5.	9.	112	122	100	9.	115	124	101
	10.	85	81	92	10.	94	88	102
6.	11.	93	94	95	11.	108	85	133
	12.	100	92	109	12	85	86	86
7.	13.	119	106	130	13.	80	84	80
	14.	109	98	120	14.	100	90	111
8.	15.	77	73	85	15	100	98	101
	16.	95	91	101	16.	90	88	93

Table 1 (con't)

(n=40)								
Treatment (n=20)					Control (n=20)			
Subjects		F	V	P	Subjects	F	V	P
Sch.	Psy							
9.	17.	87	79	98	17.	85	87	85
	18.	92	88	100	18.	83	81	87
10.	19	104	100	109	19.	80	84	80
	20.	101	105	96	20.	85	86	87

F=Full Scale Score

V=Verbal Scale Score

P=Performance Scale Score

other subject. For example, the first school psychologists tested subjects 1 and 2 of the treatment group and 1 and 2 of the control group.

The means and standard deviations were calculated for the experimental and control groups (see Table 2). The data showed the means and the standard deviations between the two distributions for each of the three variables to be similar.

Table 2

Means and Standard Deviation Scores for WISC-R Measures

	Experimental group (n=20)		Control Group (n=20)	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Full Scale	95.75	10.34	94.45	13.02
Verbal Scale	91.4	11.23	89.15	15.82
Performance Scale	101.95	12.53	96.6	13.92

The data yielded by the posttest measures of the WISC-R for the experimental and the control groups were analyzed by a *t*-test comparison of the means. In evaluating Ho#1, the .05 level of statistical significance was used. The difference between E1 and E2 was less than the value required to reject the null hypothesis at the .05 level of significance (t (38) = 2.042). The observed t-ratios were

.341 for the Full Scale, .506 for the Verbal Subscale, and 1.277 for the Performance Subscale (see Table 3). The null hypothesis was, therefore, not rejected.

Table 3

t-test Results of Children's WISC-R Test Performance

	df	t
Full Scale Score	38	.341
Verbal Scale Score	38	.506
Performance Scale Score	38	1.277

School Psychologists

An analysis of variance procedure was conducted to examine the potential variation across school psychologists (examiners). Each school psychologist tested four children. The data yielded by the posttest measures of the WISC-R for each of the four children per school psychologist were analyzed. The analysis yielded nonsignificant F statistics: Full scale .75; Verbal scale 1.08; and Performance scale .78 (see Table 4). There was no significant difference due to the school psychologist variable. Any differences among school psychologists was not a factor in this study.

Table 4

Summary Table for Analysis of Variance Results Across School Psychologists for WISC-R Scores

Source	SS	df	MS	F Value	P
Full Scale					
Between	1015.60	9	112.84	.75	.6636
Within	4530.	30	151.		
Total	5545.60	39			
Verbal Scale					
Between	1734.225	9	192.69	1.08	.4084
Within	5374.75	30	151.		
Total	7108.975	39			
Performance					
Between	1323.72	9	147.08	.78	.6341
Within	5640.25	30	188.0083		
Total	6963.975	39			

Children's Perceptions

Analysis of Hypothesis II

The null hypothesis relating to the effect of the SSI on the children's perceptions of the school psychologists was not rejected.

Ho#2: There will be no significant difference between experimental groups E1 and E2 on children's perceptions of the school psychologists, as measured by the Children's Perception Rating Profile.

A multivariate *t*-test, Hotelling's T^2, was used to analyze the data yielded by Section A of the Children's Perception Rating Profile. This statistical test was used due to the assumed correlation among the items on the CPRP. The Hotelling's T^2 showed that there was no difference (F (6,35) = 1.10, p=.3811) between the experimental and the control group. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

Analysis of Hypothesis III

The null hypothesis relating to the effect of the SSI on the children's perception of their test performance was not rejected.

Ho#3: There will be no significant difference between experimental groups E1 and E2 on children's perceptions of their own test performance, as measured by the Children's Perception Rating Profile.

The Hotelling T^2 was used to analyze the data yielded by Section B of the Children's Perception Rating Profile. The Hotelling's T^2 showed that there was no difference (F (5,36) = 1.75, p=.1474) between the experimental and the control group. The null hypothesis was, therefore, not rejected.

Further Analyses

An analysis of variance procedure was conducted to examine the potential variation across school psychologists (examiners). The data yielded by the posttest measures of the CPRP for section A and B were used in this analysis. For section A, regarding the childrens' perceptions of the school psychologists, the analysis yielded a nonsignificant *F* statistic of .57. For section B, regarding the childrens' perceptions of their test performances, the analysis yielded a nonsignificant *F* statistic of 1.27 (see Table 5). There was no significant difference due to the school psychologist variable. Any differences among school psychologists were not a factor in this study.

Table 5

Summary Table for Analysis of Variance Results Across School Psychologists for CPRP Scores

Source	SS	df	MS	F Value
Section A				
Between	54.02	9	6	.57
Within	315.75	30	10.53	
Total	369.77			
Section B				
Between	300.90	9	33.43	1.27
Within	790.50	30	26.35	
Total	1,091.40			

For exploratory purposes analysis of variance procedures were performed on each of the CPRP items comparing treatment and control groups (see Table 6). An examination of the individual questions indicated that item A6 (F(1,40) =5.26, p=.0271) and item B5 (F(1,40) = 6.84, p=.0125) suggest significant differences.

Table 6

Summary Table for Analysis of Variance Results of Individual Items on CPRP

Source	SS	df	MS	F	P
A1					
(The school psychologist was friendly)					
Between	.02380952	1	.02380952	.22	.6436
Within	4.38095238	40	.10952381		
Total	4.40476190	41			
A2					
(The school psychologist wanted to know how I saw things)					
Between	.09523810	1	.09523810	.07	.7915
Within	53.80952381	40	1.34523810		
Total	53.90476190	41			
A3					
(The school psychologist wanted to know how I felt)					
Between	.02380952	1	.02380952	.02	.8891
Within	48.38095238	40	1.20952381		
Total	48.40476190	41			
A4					
(The school psychologist liked me)					
Between	.02380952	1	.02380952	.06	.8020
Within	14.95238095	40	.37380952		
Total	14.97619048	41			

Table 6 (con't)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
A5					
(I would like to meet the school psychologist again)					
Between	.59523810	1	.59523810	1.76	.1921
Within	13.52380952	40	.33809524		
Total	14.11904762	41			
A6					
(I felt comfortable with the school psychologist)					
Between	2.38095238	1	2.38095238	5.26	.0271*
Within	18.09523810	40	.45238095		
Total	20.47619048	41			
B1					
(During the test I tried hard)					
Between	.00000000	1	.00000000	.00	1.000
Within	10.57142857	40	.26428571		
Total	10.57142857	41			
B2					
(The school psychologist wanted me to try my best)					
Between	.21428571	1	.21428571	1.12	.2952
Within	7.61904762	40	.19047619		
Total	7.83333333	41			

Table 6 (con't)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
B3					
(The school psychologist helped me relax)					
Between	.02380952	1	.02380952	.02	.8848
Within	44.76190476	40	1.11904762		
Total	44.78571429	41			
B4					
(During the test I was nervous)					
Between	.00000000	1	.00000000	.00	1.0000
Within	90.28571429	40	2.25714286		
Total	90.28571429	41			
B5					
(The school psychologists asked me about: friends, school, family, and feelings)					
Between	126.88095238	1	126.88095238	6.84	.0125*
Within	741.61904762	40	18.54047619		
Total	868.50000000	41			

*significant results at p <.05

Item B5 consisted of the following four parts: The school psychologist asked me about (BB1) friends, (BB2) school, (BB3) family, and (BB4) feelings. A Hotelling T^2 was used to analyze the data from these four items of the CPRP. The Hotelling's T^2 showed that there was no difference (F(4,37)=2.24, p=.0829) between the experimental and the control groups. Therefore, the null hypothesis was not rejected.

For exploratory purposes analyses of variance procedures were performed on each of the items which made up item B5 (see Table 7). There were significant differences found between experimental and the control groups for BB1, (F(1,40)=5.79, p=.0209) and BB3, (F(1,40)=8.44, p=.0060).

A frequency distribution of the responses to the CPRP suggests that the scores cluster near the more positive responses (see Table 8). On the CPRP the number one was a more favorable response than the number five. It appears that for groups E1 and E2 there were more positive than negative responses on the CPRP.

Treatment Integrity

Treatment integrity of the semi-structured interview was established through two methods. First, after asking each question of the interview, the school psychologists were required to place a check mark beside the question. The

Table 7

Summary Table for Analysis of Variance Results of Item B5 of the CPRP

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
BB1					
(The school psychologist asked me about friends)					
Between	12.59523810	1	12.59523810	5.79	.0209*
Within	87.04761905	40	2.17619048		
Total	99.64285714	41			
BB2					
(The school psychologist asked me about school)					
Between	2.38095238	1	2.38095238	1.46	.2340
Within	65.23809524	40	1.63095238		
Total	67.61904762	41			
BB3					
(The school psychologist asked me about family)					
Between	18.66666667	1	18.66666667	8.44	.0060*
Within	88.47619048	40	2.21190476		
Total	107.14285714	41			
BB4					
(The school psychologist asked me about feelings)					
Between	6.88095238	1	6.88095238	3.19	.0815
Within	86.19047619	40	2.15476190		
Total	93.07142857	41			

*significant results at $p < .05$

Table 8

Results of Frequency Distribution of Responses on the CPRP

	(1) E1/E2	(2) E1/E2	(3) E1/E2	(4) E1/E2	(5) E1/E2
A1	18/17	2/3	-	-	-
A2	8/8	9/6	1/4	-/1	2/1
A3	9/9	7/5	2/5	1/-	1/1
A4	16/15	3/3	1/2	-	-
A5	17/15	3/2	-/3	-	-
A6	15/8	4/8	1/4	-	-
B1	14/15	6/4	-/1	-	-
B2	18/16	2/3	-/1	-	-
B3	9/7	7/8	2/4	-/1	2/-
B4	7/8	5/1	4/7	-/2	4/2
BB1	14/5	2/5	-/3	2/3	2/4
BB2	12/9	6/5	-/2	1/1	1/3
BB3	17/9	-/1	1/2	1/3	1/5
BB4	12/8	4/2	2/2	-/4	2/4

1=strongly agree; 2=agree; 3=neutral; 4=disagree;

5=strongly disagree

E1=experimental group

E2=control

interview forms were reviewed by the researcher. Each of the twenty forms had 100% of the questions checked. Additionally, the results of question B5 on the CPRP indicated that from the child's perception the school psychologists asked questions indicative of those from the semi-structured interview.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Summary

The purpose of the present investigation was to examine the effects of a semi-structured interview on the test performance and perceptions of exceptional children. Forty elementary school students were drawn from a computerized list of names of students referred for testing by school psychologists during the spring of 1988. Participants were chosen from either second or third grade, and had been referred for academic difficulties. They were randomly assigned to either the treatment or the control group. The treatment group received a half-hour semi-structured interview (SSI) one week prior to the administration of the dependent measures.

Using a randomized posttest only, control group design, both the treatment and control groups were administered the WISC-R and the Children's Perception Rating Profile.

Conclusions

The data yielded by the posttest measures of the WISC-R were analyzed by a t-test comparison of the means. No significant differences were found between the experimental and the control groups. The majority of existing literature presented in Chapter II concluded that familiarity with an examiner influenced children's test performance. The results of the present study are in contradiction to those cited. One conclusion is that the SSI was not effective for these students and, therefore, it may not be necessary for a school psychologist to spend time with a child prior to the administration of the WISC-R, such as in the case of the SSI. The SSI apparently did not optimize test performances.

An analysis of variance procedure conducted to assess potential differences that might have been due to school psychologists yielded nonsignificant results. It would appear from these results that any differences among school psychologists was not a factor in this study.

The Children's Perception Rating Profile (CPRP) was analyzed by using a Hotelling's T^2. This test showed no significant differences between the experimental group and the control group on the rating of the CPRP. Thus, it appears that a child's perception of a school psychologist and a testing situation was not influenced by the semi-structured interview.

For exploratory purposes an analysis of variance procedure was conducted on each of the individual items of the CPRP. This resulted in two items demonstrating a significant difference. One of the items B5 was further analyzed as it contained four separate questions BB1-4. A Hotelling T showed no significant difference between the experimental and the control groups on these four items. Analysis of variance procedures showed that there were statistical differences between the experimental and control gorups on items BB1 and BB3.

The analysis of variance procedures conducted on the individual items treats them as if they were independent. Yet the items were correlated, and it is difficult to take the items out of context. The Hotelling's T^2 considers the whole group and assumes a correlation exists between the items. Therefore, no conclusions were drawn from these observed differences.

Limitations

One limitation to consider was in the method of establishing familiarity. In this study it was assumed that pretest contact in a semi-structured interview format would be adequate to foster familiarity. In the majority of previous studies, the method of establishing familiarity was through more extensive play activities. The SSI emphasized the interview process, enabling the school psychologist to gain more information about a child through a series of questions. The content involved gaining the children's perceptions of their world and of themselves. This may have been too structured a format.

The SSI may not have been sensitive enough to the personal needs of a student. The process of asking questions and making statements in regard to these questions may have been seen as a test. Perhaps these questions were seen by the child as an intrusion rather than a genuine interest in the child. Although familiarity, as defined, was accomplished, the SSI may have masked some other variables (e.g., increased anxiety) which negated any positive effect that familiarity alone may have had.

A second factor involved the duration of time used to establish familiarity. The 30-minute session scheduled per child for the SSI may not have been long enough to have influenced a child's test performance. The time frame used in this study was less than that used in the majority of previous studies which demonstrated an effect. More than an extra half hour, however, for school psychologists who are already under severe time constraints, may not be feasible. It seemed more reasonable for school psychologists, during a day they were testing one child, to conduct a one half-hour semi-structured interview with another child who was scheduled for testing the following week. This time period, consequently, was used.

An additional limiting factor to consider was the sample size. This study's sample consisted of twenty subjects in the treatment group and twenty in the control group for a total of forty subjects. A larger sample might have altered the results.

Implications

The results of this study are similar to those of Irons (1981) who concluded that familiarity with the examiner had no significant influence on the WISC-R Verbal, Performance, or Full Scale scores. The strongest and most favorable implication is that the WISC-R is robust enough to withstand the extra-test variable of familiarity. Due to the wide use of standardized tests in making placement and programming decisions, the results support the validity and reliability of the WISC-R in intellectual assessment.

If familiarity does not influence the test performance of children, school psychologists may not need to take additional time establishing rapport. In addition, Irons (1981) suggested that if familiarity does not influence test performance, then assigning a school psychologist to a single school to establish familiarity may not be necessary. Furthermore, contractual services are sometimes used to insure adequacy of psychological services. These individuals visit numerous schools and are generally unfamiliar with the children in these schools. The results of this study could support the use of contractual personnel who may not know a child prior to testing. This finding is particularly important to administrators who must address availability of personnel, time, and cost of services.

In examining the results of the Children's Perception Rating Profile, it appeared that both the experimental and the control groups had positive views of the school psychologists. For instance, in response to the first item, "The school psychologist was friendly," all of the children in both experimental groups gave the school psychologists either a 1 or a 2 rating. This indicated that for these students, under these conditions, positive perceptions were established during the standard introductory time suggested by the WISC-R manual.

Recommendations for Future Research

As a result of the findings in this study, the following recommendations are made in order to guide future investigations in this area:

1. Future researchers may wish to address the method of establishing familiarity or to decide if familiarity is linked with a positive relationship. If an interview were to be used, the content and process might be altered. The use

of more facilitative responses, as well as of an unstructured interview, may offer a more sensitive process to establish a more positive relationship. Consideration should also be given to the number and type of content areas discussed.

2. Previous investigations demonstrating significant results used play activities to foster familiarity. Future researchers may wish to add a third treatment group involving more play sessions. Play sessions may facilitate more positive familiarity.

3. Different results may be obtained by increasing the time spent with children in establishing familiarity. Because the review of the literature showed that different procedures were used and implemented over various times, some researchers may wish to investigate the variable of time and its relationship to familiarity.

The results indicated no significant differences between the treatment and control groups, at the .05 level of significance, for the test performance and perceptions of the children used in this study. The variable of familiarity and its impact on test performance remains unclear. These results are in conflict with the majority of studies conducted to date.

APPENDIX A
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW

OBJECTIVES:

1. To develop a positive relationship which has the following characteristics: genuiness, emphathy and unconditional positive regard.

2. To obtain the child's perceptions of:

   (A) Their environment: school, family, peers.
   (B) Their self: interests, perceptions, wishes.

MATERIALS

1. The toys will be limited to two or three puppets which will be placed within reach of the child.

2. The school psychologist was required to have a clipboard and a copy of the questions to be asked.

GENERAL PROCEDURES:

1. Meet the child in the classroom and be introduced to the child by the teacher.

2. When greeting the child, it is important to physically be at eye level. Because seven year olds often find it disturbing to have their play routines interrupted, they will be told that they will be back prior to play time. Example "Your teacher mentioned that your class will see a special movie this morning. We'll be back before it is time to start."

3. Walk together to the designated evaluation room. Along the way discuss the activity the child was engaged in prior to leaving the room.

4. The half-hour session will be divided into three stages: Stage I: establishing rapport, Stage II: interview questions, Stage III: termination and future plans.

Stage I: Rapport Building

This period will last approximately ten minutes. Please be aware of the child's comfort level, general demeanor and expressive abilities throughout the interview. During this time the following tasks will be achieved:

(1) The child will be allowed to play with the puppets if he/she chooses.
(2) Conversation will begin when meeting the child and continue throughout the interview.
(3) Begin to ask the series of questions outlined in stage II.
(4) Explain the purpose of the meeting.

Stage II: Questioning

This period will last approximately 15 minutes. The goal of this stage is to obtain the child's perception of his/her world. The questions are divided into two major areas: (1) the child's perception of their environment, and (2) their perception of themselves. The "environment" includes school, family and peers; while the "self" includes interests, perceptions and wishes. Have a copy of the questions to be asked on a clipboard. To ensure that each question has been asked place a check mark beside each item. The questions proceed from the specific to general under each topic heading. Please speak slowly, and modulate your voice.

Stage III: Terminating

This period will last approximately five minutes. During this time the following tasks will be achieved:

(1) acknowledge the effort the child has expended.
(2) summarize the content discussed.

(3) reflect to the child that you understand their perspective of the issues discussed.
(4) prepare the child for the end of the session.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Without interrupting the child's play activities ask the following questions. These questions begin immediately upon entering the room where the interview is conducted. Threatening topics are not to be discussed. The goal is to establish a positive relationship. Incorporate statements which summarize the child's responses and which reflect an understanding of the child's feelings.

I. Environment: School, Family, Peers.

School

Introduction: I understand that you are in the third grade. Lets talk a little about school.

1. What do you like best about school?____________

____

2. What's your favorite subject?__________________

____

3. What subject do you like least?________________

____

4. Do you have a favorite teacher?________________

____

5. Tell me about this teacher_____________________

____

Summarize content and reflect feelings expressed.

Family

Introduction: Transition Statement (e.g. I'd like to know a little about your family.)

1. Who lives in your house?________________________

____

2. What do you do at home after school?____________

____

3. What do you do on the weekend?__________________

____

4. What does your (mom) do that you like? (Dad, Sister, Brother)________________________________

____

____

5. What's it like to have a brother/sister? (or be an only child?)_________________________________

____

6. Do you like to be at home?________________________

____

Summarize content and reflect feelings expressed.

Peers

Introduction: Transition Statement (e.g. We've talked about school and your family, how about your friends?)

1. Tell me the names of some of your friends in school or in your neighborhood.______

____

2. Do you have a best friend?______________________

____

3. What makes (friend's name) your best friend?____

____

4. What kinds of things do you like to do together?

____

____

5. Tell me what you like to do after school with other friends?________________________________

____

Summarize content and reflect feelings expressed.

II. Self: Interests, Self-evaluation, Wishes

Introduction: Transition Statement (e.g. I'd like to get to know you better. Lets talk about things that interest you.)

1. What hobbies do you have?______________________

____

2. Tell me, what other activities do you like?____

____

3. What are your favorite games?___________________

____

4. Tell me three things you like about yourself.____________________________________

____

5. If I could grant you three wishes what would they be?____________________________________

____

Summarize content and reflect feelings expressed.

Please note any comments you may have regarding this interview.

____

____

____

____

____

APPENDIX B
VIDEOTAPED INTERVIEW EVALUATION FORM

For each of the questions listed, please use the following system:

1=Not at all 2=Little 3=Moderate 4=Considerable 5=Great

PLEASE CIRCLE IN THE ROW NEXT TO EACH ITEM YOUR CHOICE

To what degree did the interviewer:

1. Engage the child in conversation at once: 1-2-3-4-5

2. Facilitate the child's self-expression, by adopting a neutral and premissive attitude: 1-2-3-4-5

3. Take an active role in guiding the interview process: 1-2-3-4-5

4. Establish friendly relationships, via acceptance and warmth: 1-2-3-4-5

5. Encourage play throughout the interview: 1-2-3-4-5

6. Gear the interview questions to the child's level of cognitive understanding: 1-2-3-4-5

7. Obtain an accurate understanding of the child's perception of his or her world: 1-2-3-4-5

8. To what degree did the interviewer obtain the child's perception of their school functioning:

1-2-3-4-5

To determine the degree, look at the following list of possible areas and circle either yes or no, then review your responses to determine the degree:

What the child likes best about school yes no

What the child's favorite subject is yes no

Who the child's favorite teacher is yes no

What the child likes about this teacher yes no

9. To what degree did the interviewer obtain the child's perception of their family relationships:

1-2-3-4-5

To determine the degree, look at the following list of possible areas and circle either yes or no, then review your responses to determine the degree

Who lives in the child's home yes no

What the child does after school yes no

What the child does on the weekend yes no

What the child likes about his/her mother yes no

What the child likes about his/her father yes no

What the child likes about his/her sister/brother yes no

What the child thinks about having a sibling yes no

Or what the child thinks about not having siblings yes no

Does the child like to be at home yes no

10. To what degree did the interviewer obtain the child's perception of his/her relationship with their peers:

1-2-3-4-5

To determine the degree, look at the following list of possible areas and circle either yes or no, then review your responses to determine the degree:

What the names of some frineds were
yes no

Does the child have a best friend
yes no

What makes this friend a best friend
yes no

What kinds of things do they do together
yes no

What does the child like to do after school with friends
yes no

11. To what degree did the interview obtain the child's perception of his/her emotional functioning:

1-2-3-4-5

To determine the degree, look at the following list of possible areas and circle either yes or no, then review your responses to determine the degree:

What hobbies the child has
yes no

What types of activities the child likes to do
yes no

What the child's favorite games are
yes no

Three things that the child likes about himself/herself
yes no

Three wishes the child would make
yes no

APPENDIX C
CHILDREN'S PERCEPTION RATING PROFILE

Introduction

This instrument should be administered immediately following the administration of the WISC-R. For each of the questions listed, please have the child circle a number in the row next to each item. The continuum from 1-5 deals with the degree to which the child agrees with the statement. To facilitate comprehension please read each question to the child. Please try and have the same inflections, tone, facial expression and rate for each statement. Thank you for your cooperation.

Please read the following instructions to the child.

You have met with a school psychologist who has given you a test. We need to know more about the school psychologists and some of your feelings about being tested. I have some questions that I would like you to answer. This is your answer sheet and I have a copy of the questions so we can read them together. It's important for you to know that I am only interested in your opinions and there are no right or wrong answers. The numbers one through five have to do with what best described what happened with the school psychologists or how strongly you agree with what the statement says.

Example

strongly agree/agree/neutral/disagree/strongly disagree

1. I like ice cream 1 2 3 4 5

2. I like eating dirt 1 2 3 4 5

PLEASE CIRCLE YOUR CHOICE IN THE ROW NEXT TO EACH ITEM

SECTION A

1. The school psychologist was friendly. 1-2-3-4-5
2. The school psychologist wanted to know how I saw things 1-2-3-4-5
3. The school psychologist wanted to know how I felt 1-2-3-4-5
4. The school psychologist liked me. 1-2-3-4-5
5. I would like to meet the school psychologist again 1-2-3-4-5
6. I felt comfortable with the school psychologist 1-2-3-4-5

SECTION B

1. During the test I tried hard 1-2-3-4-5
2. The school psychologist wanted me to try my best 1-2-3-4-5
3. The school psychologist helped me relax 1-2-3-4-5
4. During the test I was nervous 1-2-3-4-5
5. The school psychologist asked me about

friends	1-2-3-4-5
school	1-2-3-4-5
family	1-2-3-4-5
feelings	1-2-3-4-5

APPENDIX D
PROCEDURES

1. Week one conduct the semi-structured interview with two children.

   Please ask all questions and follow directions as closely as possible.

2. One week later administer the WISC-R to the two children. Please fill out the WISC-R summary form.

3. Ask the guidance counselor to administer the CPRP immediately following the administration of the WISC-R. Ask the guidance counselor to place the completed CPRP in an envelope along with your WISC-R summary form. Please return this envelope to the school psychology department.

4. Ask the guidance counselor to administer the CPRP to the same children a second time four or five consecutive days later. Leave the guidance counselor with a pre-addressed stamped envelope to mail the second CPRP to the researcher.

5. Administer the WISC-R to two additional children who have not received the semi-structured interview during the second week. Please ask the guidance counselor to administer the CPRP to these two children immediately following the administration of the WISC-R and again five days later. Please place the two CPRP forms and the two WISC-R summary sheets in the provided envelopes and bring to the school psychology department. Please leave a pre-addressed stamped envelope with the guidance counselor to mail the second CPRP to the researcher.

APPENDIX E
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

School Psychologists Name ________________________________

Age________________ Sex ________________Race_____________

No. of years as a school psychologist____________________

Highest degree received___________________________________

APPENDIX F
SCHEDULING EXAMPLE

School psychologists__________________________during the first week please see___________________________ and______________________and adminster the semi-structured interview during the morning hours.

During the second week please administer the WISC-R to all four of the following children :

(1)____

(2)____

(3)____

(4)____

Child #1 is located at:____________________________________

Child #2 is located at:____________________________________

Child #3 is located at:____________________________________

Child #4 is located at:____________________________________

Please see all children in the morning as close to 9:00 a.m. as possible for both the semi-structured interview and the follow-up administration of the WISC-R. Please record the day and time of meeting on the WISC-R sheets enclosed. The four WISC-R record forms enclosed have been pre-coded, please use appropriate record form for each child.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR ASSISTANCE

APPENDIX G
SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW SUMMARY SHEET

Name of Child____

Name of Interviewer__________________________________

Date______________________

Time: Begin ____________ End _________________

Description of Room__________________________________

____

Play Materials ______________________________________

Comments ____

____

____

____

APPENDIX H
WISC-R SUMMARY SHEET

NAME________________________AGE ________________ SEX _______

SCHOOL _______________________________ GRADE ________________

PLACE OF TESTING__________________ TIME ____________________

TESTED BY____

SCORES: SCALED SCORE/ IQ

VERBAL SCORE _________/______________

PERFORMANCE SCORE_________/___________

FULL SCALE SCORE_________/___________

COMMENTS:

____

____

____

____

____

____

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Cynthia A. Kinnane was born April 5, 1952, in Newport, Rhode Island. She earned the degree of Bachelor of Science in psychology from Framingham State College in 1974. She received her Master of Education degree from the Department of Education at Boston University in 1977. In 1982 she received her Specialist in Education degree from the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Florida.

Her research activities have included work at the Children's Hospital in Boston under Dr. Martha Denckla in the area of learning disabilities and Dr. Yoichi Matsumiya in the area of cortical evoked potentials. She gained further experience working with Dr. Harold Goodglass of the Boston Veteran's Hospital studying cortical function. Her professional activities have included diagnostic assessment, individual counseling, consultation, and training.

On May 28, 1983, she married Trevor James Parker and is the mother of Tyler Joseph Parker, age three. She has recently been honored to have been appointed to the Mayor's Commission on Children and Youth in Jacksonville, Florida.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Robert Myrick

Robert Myrick, Chairman
Professor of Counselor Education

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Janet Larsen
Professor of Counselor Education

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Cecil Mercer

Cecil Mercer
Professor of Special Education

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the College of Education and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

December 1988

David C Smith

Dean, College of Education

Dean, Graduate School